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Akesson, Hans Olof. *Epidemiology and Genetics of Mental Deficiency in a Southern Swedish Population.* Uppsala, 1962. Institute for Medical Genetics of the University of Uppsala. Pp. 107.

DR. AKESSON REPORTS a census and a family study of mental defectives in ten southern Swedish parishes. These are areas from which there is considerable emigration; in 1958 their total population was 7,533. I.Q.s below 68 on the Terman-Merrill form L were considered as indicating mental deficiency, and I.Q.s below 50 as indicating severe mental deficiency. Ascertaining potential cases through official as well as unofficial sources, he found a prevalence of mental deficiency (including children under the age of ten) of 1.8 per cent, and of low-grade mental deficiency of 0.6 per cent. The highest prevalence was at age 10-14, and in this group it was 3.7 per cent.

Dr. Akesson discusses the provision available for these children and it is noteworthy that even in Sweden the provision of institutional places is, in these parishes, deficient by nearly 50 per cent. The provision of special education for the high-grade defectives appeared even more inadequate; twenty-six of thirty-one such children aged 7-15 years were being educated in ordinary schools.

Dr. Akesson also carried out a study of the near relatives of the patients, limited to those still resident in the parishes, but many, including perhaps a substantial proportion of the more able, had emigrated. Of greatest interest, perhaps, is the information on the children of the high-grade feeble-minded. The fertility of these was high: 85 patients had had 137 children, and this fertility was twice that of a control group matched for age, sex and domicile. This was in spite of a high proportion of unmarried among the male patients. It was possible to estimate the intellectual capacity of 83 of these children and the distribution was 6 per cent low-grade defective, 34 per cent feeble-minded, 29 per cent "subnormal" (I.Q.s approximately 68 to 83) and 24 per cent only were above 83. Of the parents of the high-grade defectives, 30 per cent were themselves high-grade defectives and about a

further 30 per cent were of "subnormal" intelligence.

C.O.C.

Ehrensvar, Gosta. *Life: Origin and Development.* London, 1963. University of Chicago Press. Pp. ix + 164. Price \$4.50: 33s. 6d. (paper).

OF NECESSITY, DISCUSSION about the origins of life is speculative and cast in a popular mould; for there is little or no real evidence to call on. But the mould need not be quite so popular as this. A third of the book is verbose chatter spiced here and there with purple passages; there may be a group of readers to whom this will appeal, but, so far, I have been lucky enough not to have met members of it. Another third summarizes general biochemistry, the outlines of paleontology and some irrelevant (and, in places, inaccurate) nuclear physics.

The remaining third deals directly with the ostensible subject of the book. It tells the now familiar story of a probiotic period on Earth when various complex organic molecules accumulated. The book is commendable because the usual assumption, that the origins of life are bound up with the synthesis of proteins and nucleic acids in the primitive environment, is not made. Instead, attention is directed at other possible catalytic agents and a scheme based on sulfur and iron compounds is proposed. This unconventionality is welcome and sensible, but it would have been more useful if it had been published as an essay in one of the many symposia on the origins of life, rather than as a book on its own.

N. W. PIRIE

de Lestapis, Stanislas, S.J. *Birth Regulation: The Catholic Position.* London, 1963. Burns Oates: Cardinal Books. Pp. 128. Price 8s. 6d.

La Limitation des Naissances, by Père de Lestapis, was fully discussed by Dr. C. P. Blacker in THE EUGENICS REVIEW for April 1960 (p. 2) and its English translation, *Family Planning and Modern Problems: A Catholic Analysis*, was reviewed by the Reverend Dr. Sherwin Bailey in

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our April 1962 number. From the latter volume Part 3, "The true meaning of the Catholic position," is now reprinted as a paperback. Its aim is best summed up by quoting the author's foreword: "This shortened edition deliberately deals with the problem of fertility only on the level of the married couple. It omits what was no less an essential part of the complete picture in my original scheme: fertility considered as an economic and political problem at the national and international level."

Marcadé, Jean. *Roma Amor*. Geneva, 1961. Nagel (London, Charles Skilton). Pp. 129. Price 13 guineas.

THIS SUMPTUOUSLY PRODUCED book is a delight to handle and the colour reproduction would be difficult to improve upon. The title must have been chosen for its palindromic effect, however, because it does not adequately describe either the subject or the philosophical handling of it.

Pictorially the work consists of superb reproductions of almost all aspects of sexual activity as shown in the arts of ancient Rome; and many of the exhibits revealed (after persuasion) by the guides of Pompeii are shown here and are better appreciated for their neutral surroundings. All those aspects of the visual and of the plastic arts are represented from crude though vital wall paintings right up to photographs of sophisticated sculpture.

The text of the book is a detached and cool appraisal of the activities shown and with clarity demonstrates that most of the pictured specimens are neither pornographic nor mere graffiti. Although erotic in the strict sense one feels sure that none but the most puritanical and hypocritical reader will take exception to the vivid reproduction of such a wide spectrum of truly human activity.

The price is high and one feels that if the publishers had been bold enough to set it a little lower the increased sale would have justified their enterprise.

D. ROBERTSON-RITCHIE

Maury, Marian (Editor). *Birth Rate and Birth Right*. New York, 1963. Macfadden Books. Pp. 222. Price 60 cents.

THE EDITOR OF this paperback anthology has herself contributed, in a well-reasoned preface, a background to the thirty papers which have been chosen for the light they throw on different aspects of the problems which have arisen through the weight of expanding populations pressing on world resources.

The first section of the book, "Witnesses for the World," consists of twenty-one articles including two which have been reprinted from THE EUGENICS REVIEW—"The Impending Crisis" by Sir Julian Huxley and "Birth Control in China" by Han Suyin. All are by authorities in their own fields, as may be seen in a few names picked at random from the list of contributors: William Vogt, Harrison Brown, Aldous Huxley, Robert C. Cook, John F. Kennedy, Arnold Toynbee, S. Chandrasekhar, Lady Rama Rau, Jacquetta Hawkes and Eleanor Mears. Some deal with the overall situation, some discuss the problems which face their own countries, others explain contraceptive techniques. Alan F. Guttmacher writes on "An Asian Scene," and Barbara Cadbury on "Eastern Advance."

The second section is headed "Witnesses for the United States" and deals for the most part with the personal and domestic, and the nationwide economic angles in America. Then follows an editorial summing-up which closes with a tribute to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the Family Planning Association and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. There is also a list of supplementary reading.

The influence of the Roman Catholic hierarchy is dealt with editorially and other religious opinions are put forward, in the second section, in an excerpt from the 1961 Statement of the National Council of Churches, amplified by Dr. James A. Pike, Bishop of California, while Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn speaks for liberal Judaism in a sermon preached in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1959 and reiterated at the Reform Jewish Conference in 1962.

Birth Rate and Birth Right is to be distributed in the British Commonwealth as well as in the United States. Its eye-catching cover design incorporates the United Nations flag and a population-graph-cum-baby-carriage (*anglice* perambulator) with the challenging query "Do

you think you have a God-given right to bring another child into the world?" This should make it stand out on the bookstalls, and it is to be hoped that it will have the circulation it deserves.

K. H.

Woodside, Moya. *Attitudes of Women Abortionists*. London, 1963. The Howard League for Penal Reform. Pp. 20. Price 2s. 6d.

THIS SURVEY BY Mrs. Moya Woodside, formerly Psychiatric Social Worker at Holloway Prison, covers the personal views and police records of a series of forty-four women recently convicted for illegal abortion.

Abortion, the writer observes, is an emotive word arousing deep feelings and strongly held opinions even among those whose profession—law, medicine, psychiatry, social work—brings them into responsible contact with the problem. For students of sociology of all ages, this appears to be a valuable survey and a reminder that, along with technical advice to underdeveloped countries, we should not neglect our English problem areas.

We are reminded that the last occasion on which the death sentence for abortion was carried out in England was 1876, and that now an increasing number of offenders is dealt with by probation, fines and conditional discharge. The reader is left to speculate how long it may be, if social and penal reform continues, before there is no penalty and therefore no demand for the back-street abortionist. Some of the women in the Survey supply an answer: "Doctors *should*

do it. Give them the right to do it." "Look at these very small girls, only thirteen—they should be able to go along to a doctor and be helped."

The case of a fourteen-year-old girl, one of a family of seven, pregnant by her father, illustrates many points. Her grandmother twice attempted abortion, but the girl in due course gave birth to what the judge at the trial termed "this incestuous bastard." The conclusion of the women that "doctors should be allowed to help" finds answering echoes beyond the prison walls. Students of eugenics, especially, might find much food for thought in further data regarding this and other peculiarly unpromising families.

Like "Dr. X," whose book *The Abortionist* Mrs. Woodside discussed in the October 1962 number of the REVIEW, these women for the most part operated from motives of kindness and compassion rather than for hope of gain (though occasionally there was the threat of blackmail). "I let me heart rule me head and I douched her." "You have to have a heart of stone not to listen to them." "They come back time after time, begging and crying." "I knew it was against the law, but I didn't feel it was wrong." These thoughts are typical.

A footnote informs us that this survey was published with the consent of the Prison Commissioners, but that it does not necessarily represent their views. How much more might have been written were the consent of the Commissioners not required? We look forward hopefully to further publications by Mrs. Woodside.

JAMES CAMPBELL